Research proposal for Ph.D. programme

Integrated Eco-Tourism Planning & Sustainable Development in Sagar Island, West Bengal

By

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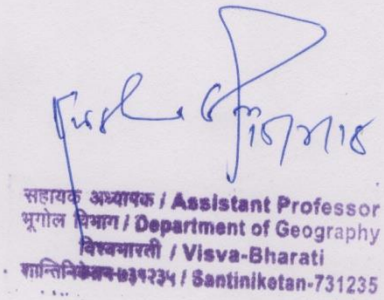
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INTEGRATED ECO-TOURISM PLANNING & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN SAGAR ISLAND, WEST BENGAL

1. Theme of the work:

Eco-tourism has become an important economic activity in natural areas around the world. It provides opportunities for visitor to experience powerful manifestations of nature and culture and to learn about the importance of biodiversity conservation and local cultures. At the same time, Eco-tourism generates income and economic benefit for communities. Eco-Tourism projects focus on pristine or fragile eco-system; hence run the risk of destroying the assets on which tourism depends. It could be as damaging as mass tourism if not properly organised.

WTO has defined it as 'Tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with specified object of studying, admiring and enjoying nature and its wild plants and animals, as well as existing cultural aspects (both of the past and present) found in these areas.'

In the fields, well planned and managed Eco-Tourism has proven to be one of the most effective tools for long term conservation of bio-diversity when the right circumstances are present. Eco-Tourism is a form nature based tourism and a strong imperative of sustainability. Moreover it is closely associated with local people and culture.

Conversation, sustainability and biological diversity are three inter-related aspects of Eco-tourism. But, sustainability is most important among the three because sustainable development ultimately helps to achieve the goal of eco-tourism of a particular tourist destination. Basically, eco-tourism planning follows the concept of sustainable development which tells proper or appropriate use of resource and sustains it for future generation.

The phrase "Integrated" includes aspects like environmental, social, economic, occupational and infrastructural which will ultimately leading to sustainable development of tourist destination. In a nutshell the development will be inclusive as much as possible so that sustainability can be achieved.

2. Importance and relevance of the study:

Eco-tourism has recently come to be regarded as the panacea that enables us to aggressively generate economy with no obvious damage to eco-system, since wild resources are not being harvested and there is no apparent associated development. Eco-tourism means management tourism and conservation of nature in a way so as to maintain a fine balance between the requirements of tourism, ecology and local communities.

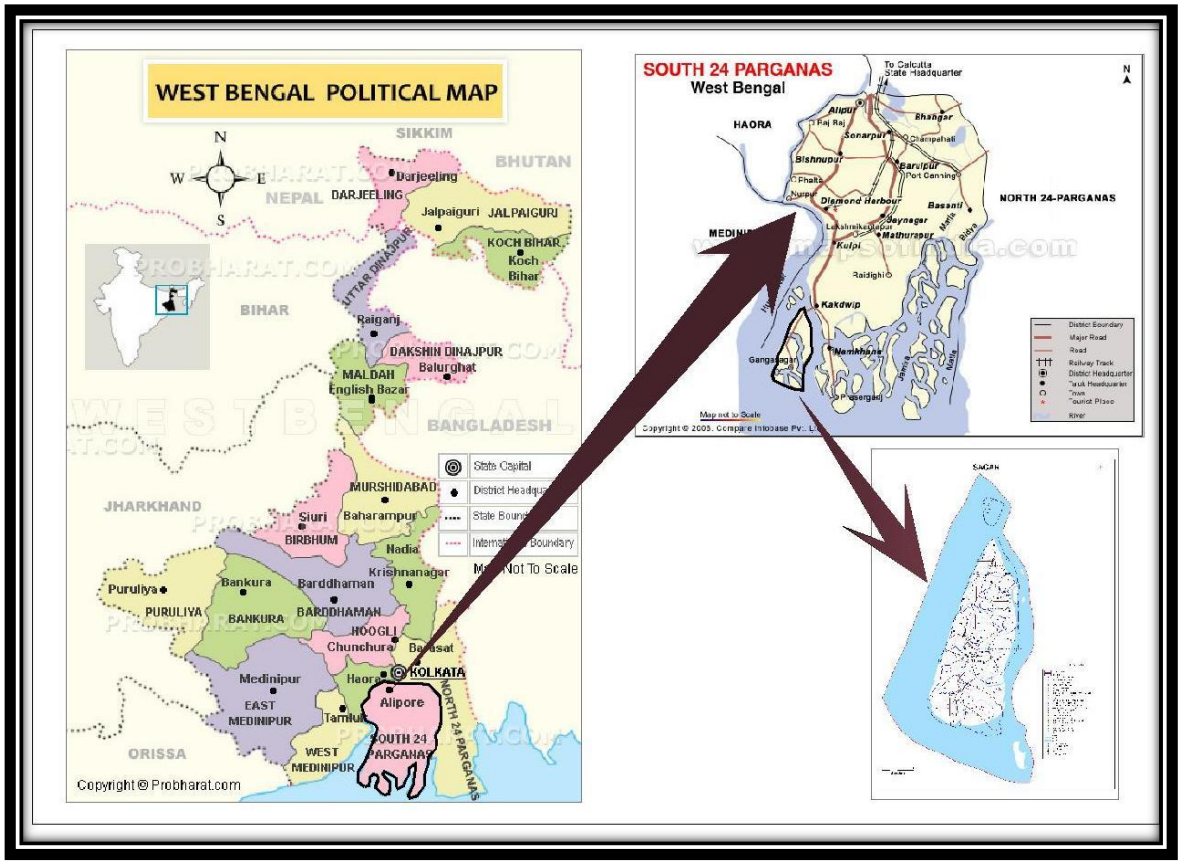
The global importance of Eco-tourism, its benefit as well as its impact was recognised with the launching of the year 2002 as the International Year of Eco-tourism (IYE) by the United Nations General Assembly. The IYE offers an opportunity to review Eco-Tourism experience worldwide in order to consolidated tools and institutional frameworks that ensure its sustainable development in the future. This means maximizing economic, ecological and social benefits from Eco-Tourism, while avoiding its shortcomings and negative impacts.

Presently, Eco-tourism is the fastest growing sector in tourism industry. The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) estimates that nature tourism generates 7% of all international travel expenditure and 20% of all international travel. Today Eco-tourism is the largest foreign exchange earner for South Africa, Kenya, Ecuador and Costa-Rica. Moreover while the tourism industry has an estimated annual growth rate of 4% nature travel boosts of growth rate between 10% and 30%. The most relevant aspect of Eco-tourism is, if it channeled in the right direction can help local economy and ecology.

3. Study Area Details:

Sagar Island is the largest delta among the Sunderban delta group which is located within South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. It is a block within Kakdwip sub-division. It has an elevation of 6.5 meter from the sea level, lying between 21°37’21’’-21°52’28’’ N latitude to 88°2’17’’-88°10’25’’ E longitude. The total area of the island is 268.70 sq.km with a total population of 211993 (Census-2011) consisting 9 Gram Panchayat and total 46 nos of villages. The temperature varies 10°C in winter to 39°C in summer.

It is bounded by the Hugli River in the North-West, Muri-Ganga in the east and Bay of Bengal in the South.



Location map of Sagar Island. *Source: https://www.mapsofindia.com/*

The maximum width and length of this island is 12 km and 30 km respectively and it stretched from north to south direction. The island is ravaged by tropical cyclones and influenced daily by tidal fluctuations. Being a tide-dominated deltaic island, it is geomorphologically very active and environmentally very sensitive. The morphology of this island is affected by natural coastal processes, man-made structures like seawalls and jetties, and storm waves.

4. Justification for choice of location:

i) The island already experiencing tourism activities in terms of pilgrimage tourism due to presence of Kapil Muni temple and Makarshankrantimela which pulls immense amount of pilgrimage lasts only for 5 days. Besides this activity, tourism becomes very less in the rest of the years.

Being an intertidal delta of Sunderban, this island is ornamented with large tract of white beaches with Jhaow trees, lush mangrove forests, beautiful creeks, mudflats, continuous little waves and a peaceful village life. All these enhance the potentiality of tourism apart from pilgrimage tourism in Sagar Island for all over the year.

ii) The main occupations of the inhabitants are agriculture, betel vine, pisiculture, fishing in the sea but by promotion of tourism activities and by participation into that economic condition of the inhabitants and infrastructure condition of the island definitely will improve.

Following the above points it is evident that the island has a huge potentiality to become one of an important eco-tourism centre in the state as well as in the country where presence of rich and pristine bio-diversity will create favorable condition for sustainable development.

5. Research Aim & objectives:

The study aims to Formulate "Integrated tourism which leads to sustainable development for Sagar Island on the concept of Ecotourism" The following sets of objectives are derived from the above state aim:

- Identification of the existing issues in terms of tourism (eco-tourism) and formulate strategies and policies to mitigate the issues by integrated Eco-tourism planning of Sagar Island;
- To make action area plan comprises of most potential existing tourist sites in the island and provides proposals and policies for their overall development and Identification of more potential destinations based on ground survey.
- To chalk out phase wise development plan of all potential tourism destination and action areas.
- Improvement of connectivity between action areas of the Island, as well as between Sagar Island and surrounding areas and propose tourism circuit planning;
- Proposal of those plans and eco-products which ensures maximum level of local people participation which help to improve their economic condition as well as help to protect the eco-diversity of Sagar Island;
- Apart from Pilgrimage Tourism, establish Sagar Island as an eco-tourism destination throughout the year without hampering the local bio-diversity and with participation of local people which ultimately enhance the livelihood opportunity.
- To channelize all plan and policies in the line sustainable development and where tourist will realize the importance of Sagar Island in the context of pilgrimage and understand its rich bio diversity and its people which ultimately leads to a healthy eco-tourism programme.

6. Hypothesis:

Biodiversity rich areas are being rapidly opened for eco tourism. In the absence of coherent policy, regulation and guidelines, current form of ecotourism has impacted biodiversity, lives and governance systems of communities. This has resulted in loss of rights and benefits arising from use of biological resources to communities and also other developments in different sectors like social, economic, infrastructural etc. also hampered.

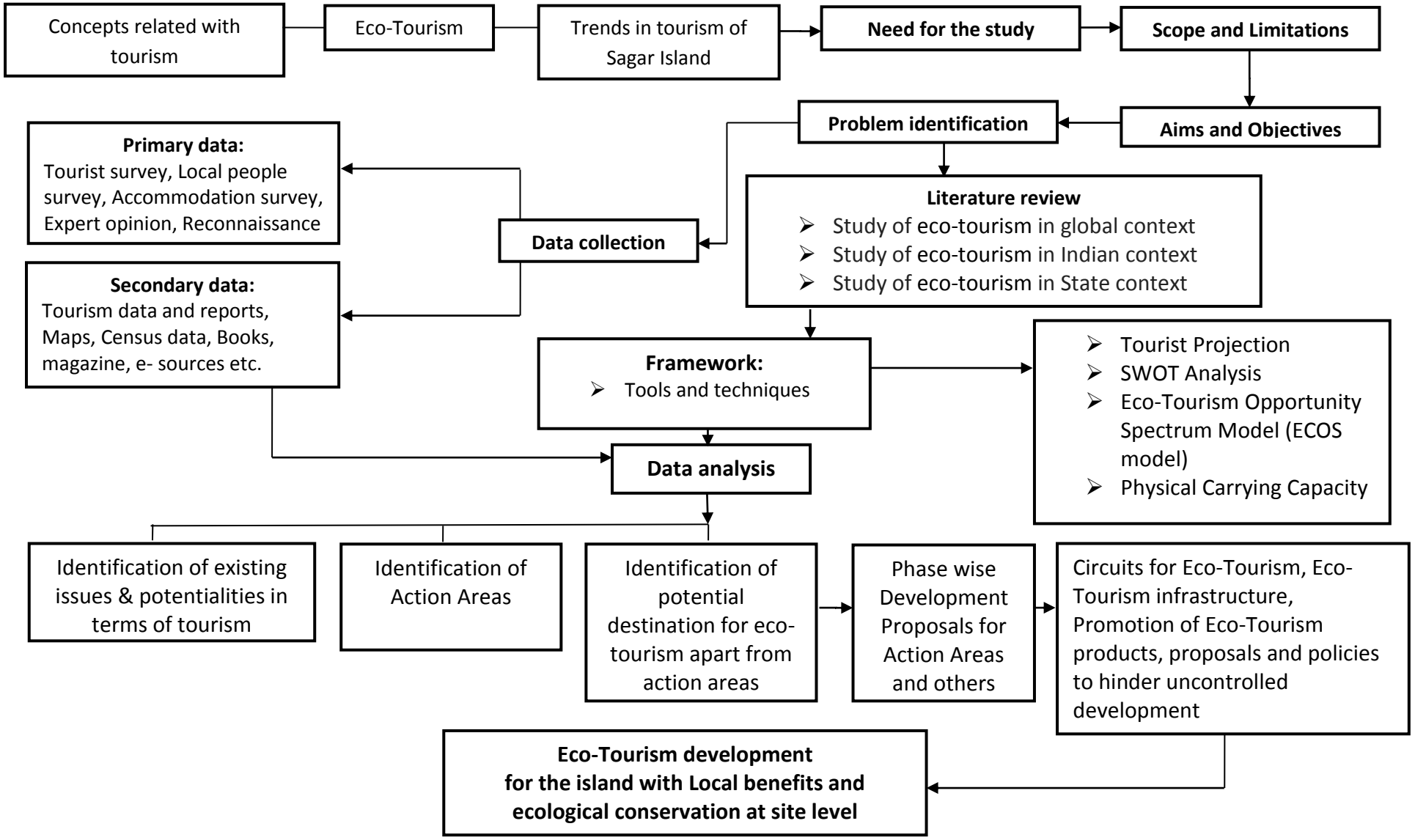
7. Details of Similar work if already carried out elsewhere:

The role of Eco-tourism project is not only to guarantee the sustainable use of environmental resources but also generate economic opportunities for the local people. These two aspects completes an Eco-tourism project but it has been seen that many eco-tourism projects fails to formulate these two aspects simultaneous which causes mass tourism, destruction of biodiversity, promotion of private sectors to install eco-products etc.

In India, island based eco-tourism projects are very less in number. Few are present in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, in Kakinanda Hope Island in Andra Pradesh, in Kuruva island in Wayward dist. of kerela, SasoniMerbeel in Dibrugarh, Assam etc. In West Bengal there is no official island based eco-tourism project exists. But, all these projects failed to collaborate two main aspects of eco-tourism projects i.e. sustainable use of environmental resources and generate economic opportunities for the local people. So, this study is going to be unique in all aspects of eco-tourism and formulate plans and policies to collaborate two main aspects of eco-tourism projects simultaneously

8. Methodology:

The methodology will be adopted in this thesis, is primarily aimed to develop Sagar Island, as an ideal eco-tourism destination of the state. Though, integrated eco-tourism planning for any ecologically rich area having some specific type of constraints and problems, the applicability of this methodology will be shown with respect to Sagar Island.


Concepts related with tourism
Eco-Tourism
Trends in tourism of Sagar Island
Need for the study
Scope and Limitations
Aims and Objectives
Problem identification
Primary data:
Tourist survey, Local people survey, Accommodation survey, Expert opinion, Reconnaissance
Data collection
Secondary data:
Tourism data and reports, Maps, Census data, Books, magazine, e- sources etc.
Literature review
Study of eco-tourism in global context
Study of eco-tourism in Indian context
Study of eco-tourism in State context
Framework:
Tools and techniques
Tourist Projection
SWOT Analysis
Eco-Tourism Opportunity Spectrum Model (ECOS model)
Physical Carrying Capacity
Data analysis
Identification of existing issues & potentialities in terms of tourism
Identification of Action Areas
Identification of potential destination for eco-tourism apart from action areas
Phase wise Development Proposals for Action Areas and others
Circuits for Eco-Tourism, Eco-Tourism infrastructure, Promotion of Eco-Tourism products, proposals and policies to hinder uncontrolled development
Eco-Tourism development for the island with Local benefits and ecological conservation at site level

Work Flow chart/Methodology

9. Survey Procedure and Data Collection

The entire work will be based on both primary and secondary information to be collected and compiled from Sagar Island. The basis of the entire research work is three fold, which are as follows:

a) Pre Field study:

i) Literature survey of topics similar to the thesis topic to understand the basic concepts of eco-tourism projects.

ii) Prepare a development plan based on eco-tourism for the island.

iii) Identification of the study area using different types of map.

b) Field study:

i) Various types of Survey techniques that exists primary survey, secondary survey, direct inspection and reconnaissance survey will be relied upon for collection of information.

ii) On the basis of questionnaire, field date will be collected from each section of stakeholders like tourist, local people, Daramsalas & Govt. lodges, officials from Govt. offices and experts.

iii) Field photography will be taken as per the requirement of the work.

C) Post Field study:

i) The data generated from the field and other information will be complied and analyzed using suitable tool and techniques describes as follows:

a) Timeline projection of tourist inflow

For tourist projection calculation various methods have been applied like Linear method, Polynomial method, Arithmetic Increase Method (AIM), Incremental Increase Method (IM) and Geometric Increase Method (GIM).\ Between all of them Linear method have given the best results which taken into consideration.

b) SWOT Analysis

c) Eco- tourism Opportunity Spectrum Model (ECOS)

This tool has been applied to identify the Action Areas for Action Area Plan. Action areas have been identified by the calculating the most potent tourist sites among the all existing

tourist sites of Sagar Island. Several criteria have been selected and marks also assigned according to tourist's opinion.

d) Physical carrying capacity

Facilities are saturated beyond a particular level of population. This threshold is physical carrying capacity. It is expressed in terms of no. per space unit and no. per facility unit.

Boullon's (1985) formula for calculating Physical Carrying Capacity:

Physical Carrying Capacity = area used by the tourist/avg. individual standard

Tourist daily visits = carrying capacity × Rotation coefficient

Rotation coefficient = no. of daily hours open for tourist/ avg. time of visit

ii) Different computer software like Windows Excel, Windows Power Point Presentation and Autocad will be used.

10. Proposed Chapters of the Thesis:

The Thesis is expected to comprise the following Chapters:

1. Introduction:

2. Geographical and Historical account of the study area:

3. Population, Culture and Environment:

4. Analysis of tourist flow and tourism infrastructure:

5. Analysis and estimation for prospective tourism through different approaches, methods and applications:

6. Proposal for Tourism Circuits and Home Stay Tourism:

7. Identification of major problems and alternative eco-tourism policy measures:

8. Conclusion:

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